The Portable Home: The Domestication of Public Space*

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Much commentary indicates that, starting from the 19th century, the home has become the privileged site of private life. In doing so it has established an increasingly rigid separation between the private and public spheres. This article does not disagree with this basic conviction. But we argue that, in more recent times, there has been a further development, in that the private life of the home has been carried into the public sphere—what we call "the domestication of public space." This has led to a further attenuation of public life, especially as regards sociability. It has also increased the perception that what is required is a better "balance" between public and private. We argue that this misconstrues the nature of the relation of public to private in those periods that attained the greatest degree of sociability, and that not "balance" but "reciprocity" is the desired condition.

> At the opening of the twenty-first century, the home is increasingly fragmented and refracted as the pluralities of lifestyle, self and space are refashioned and new technologies form new forms of individuation with their attendant social relations, reconfigured families, households and communities. (Buchli et al. 2004:2)

> The transformation of the public sphere into an arena for the exposition of private life, emotions and intimacies ... cannot be understood without acknowledging the role of psychology in converting private experiences into public discussion ... The psychological persuasion has made the emotional self into a public text and performance in a variety of social sites such as the family, the corporation, support groups, television talk shows, and the Internet. (Illouz 2007:108)

CHANGING BOUNDARIES OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The boundaries between public and private are, as almost everyone has insisted (see, e.g., Weintraub 1997), shifting, porous, and unstable. In the history of Western societies we can observe, at different times and in different places, a variety of ways in which what we have come to think of as "private" and "public" behavior and practices were both linked and separated (Ariès and Duby 1987–1991). Not only do these boundaries change over time but also at any one time different groups can read them differently. Peasants and workers in modern societies, for instance, have traditionally carried more of their family and leisure life into public spaces than have the bourgeoisie, ensconced in the ample spaces and comforts of their own homes.

In that changing and developing pattern, there has been one configuration that has been especially important for the life of modern societies. Western bourgeois societies

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of the 18th and 19th centuries attempted to define, through some powerful ideological mechanisms and institutional practices, the nature of the private and public realms, and of the relations between them. They can even be said to have invented, for all intents and purposes, the very distinction between public and private—if not in law, at least in the general understanding of what were appropriate attitudes and behavior in the different social spheres (see, e.g., Ariès 1973; Silver 1997; McKeon 2005). There was private behavior and there was public behavior, and the two were meant, in principle at least, to be kept rigidly separate—as separate as the spheres of men and women, to which indeed in many respects they largely corresponded, in the world view of the 19th-century middle classes.

The most important development had to do not so much with a redefinition of the public as with the excavation, characterization, and separation of the private. The public became almost a residual sphere—it was what you did outside the private sphere, when you left it. Moreover, despite the varied practices of different groups, it became increasingly clear, as the goal to which all classes aspired, where private life essentially resided. It was the home that was the central site of private life. For the upper and middle classes especially, followed in the 19th and 20th centuries by the bulk of the working class, the home and private life came to be almost synonymous. While the equation has never been complete or final, and while the line separating public and private has never been rigid, there has undoubtedly been a tendency in modern times to restrict private life to the sphere of the home—a development going along with the sanctification of the family. All classes have shared this outlook. In the popular mind, to do things privately is to do them at home, in one's own home.

This article is concerned with the most recent developments in the relation between the home, as the sphere of private life, and the wider public sphere and public spaces beyond the home. The argument is that many of the things once done privately, in the confined domestic space of the home—eating, talking intimately, expressing emotions, entertaining oneself—are now increasingly being done outside the home, in what were formerly thought of as public spaces. But they still remain intensely private, even intimate, activities. They still carry the sign of the private. They represent the incipient, and still ongoing, "domestication of the public space."

In arguing thus, we are conscious that we are following in the footsteps of a number of other scholars who have been tracing the changing boundaries of the public and private. One theme focuses on the new relationship as expressed through new conceptions of the self, particularly as the result of the intensifying culture of consumer capitalism. Some scholars, for instance, have discerned a "commodification of the self," a "fusion of self and market," in which individuals project themselves on the world through carefully crafted "personal branding" learned through "the images, fashions, and lifestyles available in the market" (Davis 2003:46–47; see also Schor 1998, 2004).[1] The boundary between the autonomous self—with its own tastes and desires—and the public sphere of the market erodes, leading to a complex symbiosis of self and market.

[1]Davis quotes the well-known business guru Tom Peters: "We are CEOs of our own company: Me, Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is head marketer for the brand called You." As Davis puts it: "To self-brand, individuals must get in touch with their skills, the 'selling parts' of their personality, and any and every accomplishment that they can take credit for. Then they must consciously craft these traits into a relentlessly focused image and distinctive persona, like the Nike swoosh or Calvin Klein, even testing their 'brand' on the model of the marketers by using focus groups of friends and colleagues" (Davis 2003:47). For some similar analyses, focusing on such areas as childhood and religion, see the special issue of *The Hedgehog Review* (2003).

In some postmodernist theories, the self more or less disappears completely. It is overwhelmed by technology, or seen as merely a residual "effect" at the intersection of language, discourse, and power. Here all notions of "inner and "outer," "subject" and "object," "public" and "private" vanish. There is no disjunction between them; the boundaries have dissolved (Kumar 2005:143–57). A less extreme version sees an attenuation of the self, and a transformation of the private, through the impact of the consumer culture and communications technology. This both withdraws the individual from the spatially constituted public sphere and alters the nature of that sphere itself, as "spatially based community." "The spatial reorganization of society and culture around communications technologies effectively abolishes the conventional distinction between 'public' and 'private'. The overriding tendency toward 'privatization' is in this sense a matter of destroying the very concept of the 'private' by eliminating the boundary between private and public in an unbounded, expanded space of potentially endless signification and consumption" (Dunn 2000:129; see also Gergen 2000).

Then there is talk of "emotional capitalism," of a new "psychologizing" phase of capitalism in which emotions have come to be built in to the very structure of capitalist relations, suffusing economic as much as intimate and familial life (Illouz 2007). What this might amount to, as in the other cases referred to, might be better put not so much as a changed relation between public and private as the blurring and perhaps erasure of the very boundary between them. As Eva Illouz expresses it, "through the cultural medium of psychology, the private and public spheres have become intertwined with each other, each mirroring the other, absorbing each other's mode of action and justification, and ensuring that instrumental reason be used in and applied to the realms of the emotions and, conversely, making self-realization and the claim to full emotional life become the compass of instrumental reason" (Illouz 2007:112; see also Illouz 2003; Hochschild 2003; Zelizer 2005). One might not be sure where to put the stress—on the private overwhelming the public, or the public saturating the private—but the general perception, here as elsewhere, is of a fundamental shifting of boundaries or, even more significantly, of the increasing difficulty of recognizing any boundary at all. And while the remote causes might no doubt best be sought—as they are for most of these authors—in the changing character of contemporary capitalism, from a phenomenological perspective the most striking thing is what we might call the inflation or hypertrophy of the private. This is the main concern of this article.

THE MEANINGS OF PRIVATIZATION

These approaches can fairly be said to be in line with the general argument of this article, that a certain "privatization of the public" is taking place. By this we mean the carrying of the behavior, attitudes, and emotions generally associated with the private realm—specifically the home—into the public sphere. It is this that we are calling the "domestication of the public." But it is important to be clear in what sense we are using the term "privatization." Privatization has come to be associated, in the contemporary discourse, with a variety of meanings, and it is as well to distinguish these at the outset of our discussion.

It is important, for instance, to stress that the "privatization of the public" in the sense used in this article is different from the more frequently remarked *commercialization and commodification of the public sphere*: the spread of the enclosed, "privatized," closely monitored, spaces of shopping malls and "theme parks" as sites

of private consumption (see, e.g., the essays in Sorkin 1992). There can be similarities or parallels: Peter Jackson (1998:177), for instance, writes of the ways that shopping malls and the like "involve the domestication of public space, reducing the risks of unplanned social encounters and promoting the familiarity of privatized spaces." But there are also differences. Writing specifically of the redesigned urban space of South Street Seaport in New York—which replicates many others of a similar kind in major American cities—Christine Boyer observes:

> The Seaport and other such compositions speak directly to private fantasies, colluding in the privatization of public space. These shifts of public and private spheres are turning the streets and spaces of our cities inside-out. Public ways and communal spaces are being designed by the private sector as interior shopping streets within large corporate skyscrapers, or festival markets where public admittance is carefully controlled. The private sphere of nostalgic desires and imagination is increasingly manipulated by stage sets and city tableaux set up to stimulate our acts of consumption, by the spectacle of history made false. (1992:204)

It is clear here that there are a number of possible uses of the term "privatization," and of its relation to the public. This article is primarily concerned with the way in which private life, understood as the life of the home and family, is carried into the public realm, making of it an extension of the private, coloring it with what we typically think of private interests and emotions. The "privatization of public space" referred to by Boyer and others, on the other hand, concerns the walling off and segregation of areas of the public space by commercial bodies concerned, in the interests of greater profits, to provide carefully controlled sites of consumption. These, in certain respects, recreate and mimic the attitudes and activities of traditional private life. The suggestion of course is that this is an *ersatz*, artificial, private life, deliberately manipulated to stimulate consumption. Nevertheless, there is a distinct form of privatization going on here. The public spaces are no longer available to the general public, some of whom—because they make unlikely consumers—are regarded as undesirable and perhaps disorderly. The segregated spaces are annexed as the private property of the supervising corporation or corporations, to be designed and used as they see fit, and where access is controlled and movements monitored. In that sense, this use of the term privatization bears a close relationship to its conventional meaning in *neoliberal terminology*, where it refers primarily to the private realm of the market as opposed to the public realm of the state (Weintraub 1997:8–10). Specifically in present-day usage, it refers to the return to the private sphere of the market of services and activities—in health, transport, manufacturing, etc.—previously owned or controlled by public authorities.

The comments of Jackson and Boyer suggest that there is a considerable overlap in the various meanings of privatization discussed here. Both concern a conflation of realms or categories, both refer to a fusion of private with public, or rather an overwhelming or displacement of the public by the private. For critics—who are the ones most concerned with the phenomenon—this is something to be deplored, leading to a loss of certain valued experiences associated with the traditional public life of the marketplace, square, or public park. Specifically with reference to the neoliberal use, the criticism involves the further view that certain activities properly belong to the public sector and should not be left to private entrepreneurs and private corporations, whose interests are necessarily defined by their capitalist character. On

the other side are those who embrace the neoliberal ideology and who celebrate these developments, as leading to an increase in individual freedom, entrepreneurial energy, and efficiency. Both sides agree, however, that there exists a clear separation between public and private, and that there is a kind of zero-sum relation between them: the more private, the less public, and vice versa. The dispute is mainly over which is to be preferred and promoted, at the expense of the other.

Here perhaps we can see a further, often suppressed, link between the various meanings of privatization. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that what we have been calling the neoliberal use of privatization—essentially "denationalization," the assigning of a business or service to private rather than public bodies—arose in the mid-20th century at about the same time as its use in what might seem quite a different sense: the understanding of an activity or concept "in terms of its relation to or significance for the individual only as opposed to (a part of) society" (*OED*, *sv*. "privatize"). To privatize in this latter sense is to *individualize*. But the connection between the two senses distinguished is clear from the history of liberal thought and practice. "Individualism" is the name we normally give to much of that body of liberal thought that stretches from Adam Smith and John Locke to Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, by way of John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton, and other Victorian liberals. Individuals, in this view, not the state or other public bodies, are the best judge of their own interests and should be left to pursue them in their own way; the ends of public policy, at the same time, and the goal of personal striving, should be toward the greatest realization of individual capacities and the greatest fulfillment of individual desires.

Is this individualism not also the driving force and guiding thread in the other sphere of privatization, that which we have associated with domestic and family life? For while it is true that the first installment of this privatization in the 18th and 19th centuries was to seal off the home and family, as corporate entities, from the rough and tumble of the market and public life, subsequent moves have been toward the fragmentation and individualization of the home and family, under the relentless pressure of commercial forces. It is not so much the family in general, but particular members of it—as men and women, husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, teenagers and toddlers—who have been carefully targeted by the marketing departments of private corporations (Kumar 1997). It is as individuals—eating separately, entertaining themselves separately, having their own separate space within the household—that family members have increasingly seen themselves. When, therefore, armed with their mobile phones, laptops, Blackberries, and iPods, family members take their private life into the public realm, it is as individuals rather than as corporate groups that they do so. The "domestication of public space" represents then, or can be seen as, the individualization of public space. Privatization in this sense, as with the neoliberal meaning, might also fundamentally refer to the powerful current of individualism that has been the hallmark of much Western thought and experience since the 17th century (see, e.g., Abercrombie et al. 1986; Dumont 1986; Taylor 2004:3–22).

So there are overlaps and correspondences between the various uses and meanings of privatization, and what that might imply of the relation to the public. They may partake of the same overarching trend in Western societies. But it may be as well to keep them analytically separate, or at least to distinguish them carefully, as they point to somewhat different aspects of a very general development. Our concern here is with that form of privatization in which the private life of the home and family—which may well be seen highly individualistically by household members—overflows

into what has historically been considered the public realm, with its own distinctive qualities of attitudes and behavior.

One last point by way of analytical clarification. We have been speaking, as is common, of "private" and "public" as separate, and separable, spheres and categories, each with its own distinctive character. We have spoken of "overlap" and interpenetration, and of the "blurring" of boundaries. Such language, and such concepts, which stress the separate and autonomous nature of public and private, have been the special province of liberal social and political theory since the 17th century. Liberal theory—as seen in such classics as John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859)—was especially keen to emphasize the discovery and protection of privacy as a singular and perhaps unique achievement of Western modernity. Reacting against what was seen as the excessive dominance of the public institutions of state and religion in previous eras, liberalism sought to erect ideological and institutional bulwarks against the incursions of the public into the private sphere of individual life, the sphere of intimacy, friendship, and the family. Not that the claims of the public were denied; but what especially concerned liberals was the need to define and protect the private realm, seen as the sphere of authenticity and the prime source of identity. A common feature of much liberal theory was therefore the need to find the proper "balance" between public and private, to delineate as precisely as possible the activities and attitudes proper to each sphere, and to draw the boundary as clearly as was possible between them. For many such theorists, the 18th and 19th centuries represent something of a "golden age" in the achievement of such a balance in Western societies (see Benn and Gauss 1983; Habermas 1989; Gobetti 1997; Rössler 2005: *passim*, esp. 19–42).

We do not want to say that such uses are mistaken or inappropriate; they may even be necessary, and we too at various times have used such terms as "balance" to speak of the relations between public and private. But an important part of our approach is to stress not the separation and autonomy of the public and private but rather their constant interaction and reciprocity, the fact that they are in many respects constitutive of each other. There is no private without public and no public without private. The language of "boundaries," "overlaps," and "separations" may be suitable for certain purposes, so long as we recognize that what we are dealing with is a single system whose parts exist in a constantly shifting, reciprocal relation with each other.

Here we have found it particularly helpful to draw upon urban theory and history for our analysis. While social and political theory has focused on separate spheres, often in rather abstract terms, students of the physical space of the city have been more sensitive to the interaction of public and private in the built environment. It is as if the very materiality of urban space forces upon the observer the awareness of the permeability of the public-private distinction, and of the way public and private sustain and support each other.

Since the focus of this article is the private in its impact upon the public, we begin with the home, and its historic role in the constitution of the private.

"HOME, SWEET HOME"

The home is not the only site of private life. There are other places, sometimes nominally public, where one can engage in private behavior and have private thoughts. At prayer in church is one of them; communing with oneself, or nature, on a walk in the mountains, in the manner of Wordsworth, is another. One can be rapt in very

private contemplation in front of a painting in a public gallery, or while listening to music in a concert hall.

There are, we might say, public places where it is proper and fitting to be private. These are places that have been designated and acknowledged as sites for the pursuit of private concerns—places that have been specifically designed so that one *can* be private in public. In being private in these environments, one does not break any of the conventions surrounding the distinction between private and public (as one might, for instance, by bursting into song in the middle of a public concert). Society has ordered its arrangements in such a way that it has allowed for the existence of these public places where certain kinds of private activities can occur without breaching any of the accepted understandings governing the relations between public and private.

Nevertheless, they are very different from the private space of the home. Their spatial and physical character *as* public sets certain limits on what can be said and done, if not thought and felt. In certain respects they shade off into those public spaces that are sites of sociability—another way, as we shall see, of conceiving being private in public. The home has a privileged place as the domain of the private. It is where we feel we can be most ourselves, most intimate and protected in our relation both to ourselves and to others.

We begin with an image formed by a particular memory. It is late evening, toward 11 o'clock, one evening in late November. We are sitting comfortably in our home in Canterbury, England, where we used to live. There is a fire on, we each have a good glass of red wine in front of us, and we are reading companionably. It is warm and peaceful here inside the house. Outside our window though we hear the noise of groups of young people rampaging through the town. The pubs have closed; the young people have not just taken to the streets, they have taken *over* the streets. They are not necessarily violent, just rowdy and high spirited and of course a little drunk. But most people find it prudent to keep off the streets at these times. Above the shouts of the youths—men and women—one hears the wail of police cars as they prowl around "keeping the peace."

This used to be mainly a weekend phenomenon, something that took place mainly on Fridays and Saturdays, the traditional nights for kicking over the traces and having a good time. Now it is a scene repeated almost nightly not just in Canterbury but in many small towns and cities throughout England (the British media refer to it as "shire violence"). Moreover it is no longer late at night, after the pubs have closed, that young people take to the streets. On a recent visit to Canterbury, we found the young people swilling out on the streets at around nine o'clock, in broad daylight, as they roamed from pub to pub. Once more it was a time to hurry home, or go indoors to avoid what might be unpleasant encounters, or at the very least a noisy and unsettling atmosphere.[2]

We wish to call this first image the image of "Home Sweet Home." It is the "haven in the heartless world" of Christopher Lasch's (1979) famous book. The home here appears as a refuge from a disorderly and potentially threatening world on the outside. Inside is warmth, comfort, privacy. Outside is a world largely beyond our control—the streets taken over by hooligans, the public sphere dominated by careerist

[2]It is worth stressing that this is a phenomenon not just restricted to small towns and cities but is to be found increasingly in the major metropolitan centers of Britain, such as London, Liverpool, and Manchester. The British Prime Minister Gordon Brown recently proposed bringing back earlier closing in British pubs and bars to lessen the epidemic of drunkenness among young people (*The Telegraph* September 29, 2007).

politicians, faceless bureaucrats, and unimportunable corporations. One retreats into the home as into a protective shell. The home becomes the center of one's life, the source of meaning and the site of the most fulfilling and satisfying activities.[3] Work and politics are increasingly seen as instrumental and routine, if not thoroughly alienating.

This conception of the home is of course largely a 19th-century invention, a product of rapid urbanization and industrialization. The Victorians sanctified the home, made of the hearth a sacred site. It was a defensive fortress against the hard, competitive, often brutal life in the marketplace and the public sphere generally.[4] Later, with the rise of totalitarian societies in much of Europe, this vision of the home gained an even more urgent relevance. In George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), it is the illegally maintained, secretly fostered, and barely concealed private space of the home that provides some sort of refuge—illusory, as it turns out—for the rebels Winston and Julia against the all-seeing eye of the totalitarian state.[5] For many of the inhabitants of the communist states of central and eastern Europe after 1945, it was the home—often indeed, as its warm center, the kitchen—that provided the haven, the "free space" for thought and discussion, from the gaze of the official regime.

This conception of the home, as the cherished sphere of intimacy, privacy, and autonomy, remains a powerful one in contemporary Western culture.[6] It can be said to have been given added weight by many of the contemporary developments in household technology that privilege the home as the site of consumption, leisure, and entertainment (the home-based worker also exists, though not on the scale at

[3]Iris Marion Young (1997, 2004) gives a good account of this conception. See also Rössler (2005:142–68). Its most lyrical evocation is undoubtedly Gaston Bachelard's ([1958] 1994) classic study of the poetics of home and house. For the continuing appeal, in one country (the United Kingdom), of home ownership as the source of the most fulfilling private life, see Humphrey and Bromley (2005), and for the contemporary home as "the last realm of the utopian"—especially in the wake of communism's demise—see Cullens (1999).

[4]This has been frequently and amply documented—see, e.g., Houghton (1957:341–93), Ariès (1973:377–91), Davidoff and Hall (1987:Part 3); Hall (1990), Perrot (1990), and Cohen (2006). Almost everyone points out that this ideal of home reflects the ideas and interests of men rather than women, bourgeois rather than working class, and town rather than country. But the differences can be exaggerated; the bourgeois ideal of home went well beyond—above and below—the bourgeoisie. Michelle Perrot, for instance, points out that French workers of the later 19th century "dreamed of owning single-family homes, an idea that was not simply foisted on workers by the bourgeoisie but that was actually the anarchists' fondest wish" (Perrot 1990:355). For the critique from the point of view of gender, see footnote 6. The contrast with the life of the preindustrial household is vividly brought out in Sarti (2002). For the history of private life more generally—both as idea and in practice—over the *longue durée*, see Ariès and Duby (1987–1991).

[5]See the excellent discussion in Rössler (2005:146–48). It is interesting to compare Orwell's view with the scathing attack on the home and family—offered satirically, but with evident feeling—in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932).

[6]Feminists have of course for some time criticized the one-sidedness and restrictiveness of this formulation. They have denounced the ideology of the home in liberal theory—as the privileged site of privacy and intimacy—as a cover for male domination, with women consigned to the lesser, "natural," private sphere of the home and men assumed to monopolize the public sphere of politics and commerce. To seal off the home, as a protected and private sphere, from the "preying eye" of society might also mean being blind to the oppression and violence, directed especially toward women and children, that might take place behind closed doors and shuttered windows. For a good discussion of this feminist critique, together with an account of its insufficiency, see Rössler (2005:19–42). Similarly, Iris Marion Young (1997), while accepting many of the criticisms of the feminists, nevertheless argues for the "critical liberating potential" of the idea of the home. See also Chatterjee (1993:116–34), who shows that 19th-century Indian nationalist thought, in reserving the sphere of "the home" (*bahir*) for women as against that of "the world" (*ghar*) for men, meant by this to privilege women as the source of the "authentic," spiritual, India, as against the materialist, Western-dominated, world of men. The private-public distinction, it seems, does not necessarily consign women to a lower or lesser sphere; it all depends on the evaluation of the various spheres.

one time envisaged by futurologists).[7] Microwaves and cheap home delivery have made the home an easy and convenient alternative to even fast-food restaurants. DVDs on demand bring the latest movies to our homes only a month or so after their release in the cinemas (and increasingly at the same time as their theatrical release). Massive home entertainment centers, with 53-inch high-definition television screens and large surround-sound speakers, give a movie-going experience—complete with micro-waved popcorn—that rivals in many respects the traditional visit to a cinema. Email, Internet chatrooms, and video games occupy an increasing part of home-based leisure time. With the constantly decreasing prices of most home-based entertainment products, amusing yourself at home—with friends and family—becomes an ever-more attractive alternative to going out: cheaper (no parking or baby-sitting costs), less harassing (Holson 2005; see also Morley 2000:86–104).

But while this idea of the home, as a retreat or withdrawal from public spaces, continues to be appealing, it is now matched by a move in the other direction: taking the home into the public sphere, domesticating the public space. Instead of withdrawing, we now boldly and almost shamelessly parade our private selves in public. Meyrowitz (1986) had already noted some aspects of this, in his account of the impact of the electronic media in breaking down private-public distinctions. But new technologies, and the new habits to go with them, are carrying this much further. We no longer, or with such a firm sense of difference, separate home from nonhome attitudes and activities. Instead, we carry our home, or at least what we previously had reserved for the privacy of the home, into the public sphere. The home becomes eminently portable: have home, will travel.[8]

DOMESTICATING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

A second image frames this section. We are walking on the pavement behind a girl. We cannot see her face but she is holding her right hand to her ear. She is evidently talking on her cell phone. She waves her left hand in an agitated way, repeatedly cutting the air with it. She seems tense. Suddenly her whole body goes rigid. She bursts out loudly: "You bastard! You bastard!" We don't of course know whom she is talking to but we can make a reasonable guess.

This image is in a certain sense in contradiction with the first. In the first, we withdraw *into* the home. In the second, the home is turned, as it were, *outward*. But this does not mean that it, or its inhabitants, necessarily engage more with the public sphere. Quite the contrary. In this image, we take the private world of the home out into the public sphere. We privatize or "domesticate" the public space. We carry our private lives and private emotions with us into the world of the public—like the girl in the street, who was prepared without any inhibitions to show all the emotions,

[7]See further on this in Kumar (1997). For the material developments that made for the privacy of the Victorian home, see Pounds (1989:184–218) and Cohen (2006). For a rich intellectual history, concentrating especially on literary and artistic works, of the evolution of private and public in modern times, and of the embodiment of the private in domesticity, see McKeon (2005).

[8]Raymond Williams (1974:26) had some time ago noted, in relation to broadcasting, the phenomenon of "mobile privatization," by which he meant that broadcasting allowed us to "visit" far away and exotic locations without leaving the comfort and security of our homes. The new form of mobile privatization is real, in the sense that we now physically leave our home even though we still carry its traces with us into the public spaces.

express all the rage, that presumably would previously have normally been restricted to the private sphere of the home.[9]

Much of this of course has to do with the potentiality of the new technology. Cell phones—better called mobile phones—iPods, portable laptop computers, all these allow us to carry our private worlds with us into the public spaces. We are cocooned from the environment of other people by this almost solipsistic technology. We might (we have all seen this) be walking side by side with a companion. And we might be talking. But we are not talking to each other, not *conversing* (the etymology of the word tells us that that means turning to each other, associating familiarly with each other). We are holding separate conversations on our mobile phones with other people who are not here in bodily presence but in remote or virtual space.[10]

One consequence noted by researchers into our public behavior is that it is increasingly difficult to intervene in a polite way in public interactions. When two people are talking together, it is usually possible for a third party to intervene by an enquiring look, a turn of the body toward the two (or more) interlocutors—to ask, say, for directions, or simply to join in the conversation, as one might do at a party or a public rally. That is because all the parties to the conversation are present, in the same physical space. We *know* who they are, even if we do not know their names and have never met them. When people talk on their mobile phones to interlocutors who are not present, they are in the strictest sense anonymous to us. They are not present; we cannot intervene in the conversation.[11]

It would be wrong to make the mobile phone the chief culprit or even the principal expression of the domestication of public space. It is simply the most obvious, the most ubiquitous, the most familiar example of the phenomenon, in the industrialized world at least.[12] Moreover, constant additions to the functions of the mobile phone make its power, as a tool of individual empowerment, seem almost unlimited (Rosen 2005:19). But there are other technological developments that encourage, or at least permit, the colonization of public space by the concerns of the private. For instance,

[9]As usual, one needs to note that class differences affect the picture. Working-class people a hundred years ago would most likely also have been readier to express private emotions in public. But this would have been more for reasons of circumstances and necessity—the general conditions of working-class life, especially home life—than of a general acceptance of the propriety of this behavior. What seems to have changed is the nature of public conventions, making such behavior acceptable to all classes. In all such matters of personal behavior, historical periodization is notoriously difficult, complicated especially by class differences (not just the working but the upper classes, for entirely different reasons, may have been willing to express private emotions in public at one time). But the general "bourgeoisification" of society, the gradual spreading of the norms of the middle classes to all other classes, has been a frequently noted feature of Western societies in the 19th and 20th centuries—see, e.g., the references in footnote 4.

[10]When our students come out of a lecture theatre, into the open air, the first thing they do is to reach for their mobile phones (rather as in our days as students we used to reach for a cigarette). They don't generally, as we once did, exchange a few words with each other, chat about the lecture, complain about the lecturer, etc. They immediately surround themselves with their private lives and private concerns. They at once *insulate* themselves from their surroundings. The writer J. G. Ballard suggests that the real function of the mobile phone is "to separate its users from the surrounding world and isolate them within the protective cocoon of an intimate electronic space. At the same time, phone users can discreetly theatricalise themselves, using a body language that is an anthology of presentation techniques and offers to others a tantalizing glimpse of their private and intimate lives." Michael Bywater, another commentator on the appeal of the mobile phone, confesses that he feels that "with it by my side, I will be at home anywhere on the planet" (both writers quoted in Morley 2000:97–98).

[11]As Christine Rosen (2005:18) has said, "placing a cellphone call in public instantly transforms the strangers around you into unwilling listeners who must cede to your use of public space."

[12]See Brown (2004:133–35), who also uses the example of the cell phone as a symbol of "the invasion, indeed colonization, of the public by the personal." See also Rössler (2005:170–73), who, however, sees contemporary cell phone behavior as simply an extension of the long-term trend toward "individualization" in modernity, and as such an increase in personal freedom—though, as Simmel recognized, with its accompanying losses in terms of isolation and loneliness.

the Blackberry, a portable wireless device that gives one round-the-clock access to email wherever in the world one happens to be, seems destined to have as impressive a career as the mobile phone. Whether used as a mobile office or as a surrogate for actually seeing family and friends, it has already been dubbed "Crackberry" for the way it produces a craving for an email fix among its thousands of devotees. One hardened user confesses that he has to have it turned on 24 hours a day, and that "it's a good way of using dead space—dentists' waiting rooms, trains, whatever"—even holidays and funerals, it appears (*Financial Times* 2006). Indeed, there is a lot of "wasted time" in our lives, previously filled by idle conversation with friends and colleagues, even strangers encountered in public spaces. Now, in solitary communion with our Blackberry, we can profitably fill in that time without the inconvenience of going to places or seeking out people.

While the newer technology, with its more advanced miniaturization and portability, obviously carries the greater potential for carrying private life into the public spaces, we should remember that what is perhaps still the most spectacular expression of the portable home is actually quite old. With the rise of the Model-T Ford and the Volkswagen in the 1930s, the private car was launched on its wildly successful career as the hitherto unparalleled expression of personal freedom and mobility. With a well-equipped car, you have a traveling home. Sealed off from the public space, moving among a sea of other private selves, you and your family can literally carry the material and emotional substance of your domestic lives over the face of the country. You can sing, quarrel, eat, sleep, even make love—all in the privacy of the car. American films of the 1950s are full of this sense of liberation afforded by the private car, especially for young people. With the dozens of new gadgets introduced into even relatively modestly priced cars today—allowing for state-of-the-art audio and visual entertainment, online information and communication, facilities for cooking and eating, pull-out beds—the car bids fair to substitute itself almost entirely for the home. Time was when the archetypal "travelers" were the Gypsies, moving from place to place in their mobile homes. Now, at least in the affluent part of the world, we can nearly all become travelers, nomads. This has been much commented on from the point of view of the worldwide mobility of the wealthy and professional classes (e.g., Bauman 1998:77–102, 2000), but in the present context what matters is such mobility as an aspect of the domestication of public space.

The invasion of the public sphere by private interests and emotions is apparent in other areas, such as politics and the mass media. Bush, Blair, and Berlusconi, for instance, are outstanding examples of world leaders who, far from concealing their private lives behind public selves, have seemed only too intent on declarations of personal, fervently held attitudes and beliefs, particularly of a religious kind (George W. Bush begins the day's political business with daily prayers; Tony Blair's Christian faith was apparently more important to him than the support of his party or even the country). Edward Rothstein (2000:A21) remarked some years ago on the "peculiarity" of the most suggestive images of American public life in recent times: "pubic hairs on a Coke can, Monica's dress, the Jerry Springer show, a memoir of incest, the 'Big Brother' television show." Contemporary public life, he suggested, is "constructed out of pieces of exposed private life, and contemporary private life strives with all its might to make itself public." Publicity, the making of one's private life an affair of public attention and concern, becomes a passion not just for political and cultural celebrities; it draws in, with increasing force, ordinary people too. The extraordinary growth of "reality TV" in recent years, its popularity not simply with viewers but with would-be participants, attests to this development. People compete

for brides and husbands on television; they betray each other for the perfect house, or the perfect holiday; they invite experts to "make over" their homes and their bodies. Everywhere one sees ordinary men and women exposing their most intimate hopes and desires in public (Illouz 2003, 2007). At the same time the content of the public realm of the mass media shrinks in scope and quality. News programs become personality cults, contests between glamorous news "anchors." Serious discussion programs are axed by the network executives because they cannot attract enough advertising revenue or, in public systems, enough viewers and listeners. "Quality" programming—the making of documentaries or original drama series—declines in the face of the cheapness and popularity of reality TV.

Food is another area where the habits of the home and private life have invaded the public space. Until relatively recently, in most Western societies, eating was an activity confined to the more specialized and enclosed spaces of the home, school or works canteen, or restaurant. This was, as Norbert Elias ([1939] 1994) and others have shown, itself part of the great "civilizing process" that took place in Western societies since the Middle Ages. Public eating—eating in the streets and squares—was common in medieval cities. Few lower class households had kitchens; one sent meat out to be cooked or, more commonly, bought hot food from cookshops and street vendors (Mennell 1985:47). Gradually, eating places were privatized and institutionalized; eating in the street became a sign of unmannerly and even animal behavior, offensive to the civilized gaze (Valentine 1998:193–96).

Our fast-food restaurants to some extent recapitulate the cookshops and street vendors of medieval and early modern times. But even more evident is the breaking down of the old taboos against eating in public that developed from about the 16th century. It is not just young people now that one sees eating and drinking "on the hoof" in the public streets (and not only in public parks or on the beaches). The rapid growth of "take-outs" has meant that many adults, especially rushed and harassed office workers and professionals, now routinely buy food to consume in the streets on their way to shops and offices. The result is a shift or blurring of lines previously held distinct. "The practice of eating, or 'grazing,' on the street appears to be breaking down some of the social codes that helped to maintain boundaries between distinctive spaces and times. The city street no longer appears to be a space where 'private' bodily propriety is quite so rigidly regulated by the 'public' gaze" (Valentine 1998:202). "Eating out" now means quite literally eating outside, in public spaces, and not necessarily as before in the enclosed, "privatized," space of the restaurant or tavern. Again, we are not trying to be judgmental about this—for some, this development may point to an increase in sociability. We are simply observing it as one more expression of the redrawing of the public-private boundary.

The widespread use of surveillance cameras and close-circuit TV (CCTV), together with the associated rise of private security services both inside affluent "gated communities" and in public areas where the wealthy play and work, suggests another dimension to the privatization of public space. Safety and security no longer reside in the home, or can no longer be guaranteed there. Nor do the public agencies of surveillance and protection, such as the police, appear sufficiently able to protect the persons and property of the affluent professionals and business people who must venture into the public spaces for work or entertainment. Such individuals need and pay for their own protection. They are shadowed, at home and beyond the home, by a vast apparatus of surveillance and security. Hence, there arise "spaces of control," "zones of oversight and proprietary control" stretching well beyond the private homes of these groups to encompass and incorporate whole swathes of public

space—streets, parks, bazaars, plazas (Flusty 1997:58; cf. Fyfe and Bannister 1998; Low 2003; Fyfe 2004). In one aspect, this can be seen as an increase in personal freedom and mobility, and the creation of a greater sense of security that might be felt by more than just the wealthy. CCTV is not, or need not be, simply Orwellian (see, e.g., Young 1999:193; Etzioni 1999; Fyfe 2004:51–52). From another point of view, the enclosure and policing of public spaces in this way create "electronically linked islands of privilege" that inhibit interaction between individuals of different groups and cultures and thereby undermine some of the most attractive and important features of life in public spaces (Flusty 1997:58–59). But whichever way one looks at it, the main fact that it proclaims is the projection of the private lives of individuals into public space.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE: THE FRAGILE COMPACT

In liberal societies there has always, particularly in recent years with the rise of sophisticated surveillance technology, been a concern with the protection of privacy from the prying eye of the state and commerce. What has not attracted as much attention has been the move in the opposite direction, the expansion of the private, its overrunning of the public realm. We might speak of the "imperialism" or the hypertrophy of the private. Certainly one way of putting this is to speak, as we have earlier observed, of the erosion or the blurring of the boundary between public and private, though as we shall see this is an imprecise and perhaps misleading way of describing the situation. But, even if we accept this formulation, we should note that this is not the same as the blurring of the boundary—or lack thereof—well known to us from its premodern form. In the celebrated account of Philippe Ariès (1973), the medieval world knew little distinction between public and private. The square and the street, the public life of church and tavern, flowed into the home. Even for the gentry and aristocracy, their large manors, country estates, and town houses had the appearance often of small-scale urban or rural settlements. They were thronged, at all hours of the day and night, by people of all kinds and degrees. The home offered no barrier to the pressure, pleasures, and concerns of public life.

The direction of the flow is different now. It is not the public that overwhelms the private but the private that threatens to overwhelm the public. Not that this necessarily reflects the desires and inclinations of individuals themselves. This is not a spontaneous, voluntary movement. The driving force, or at least much of it, evidently comes from outside.[13] Particularly powerful are the new technologies and cultural forms engineered by the big private corporations, especially in the fields of computers, mass communications, and entertainment. There are also the political changes connected with the pervasive impact of neoliberal political ideologies. No one set of forces, and certainly not simply technological ones, can be held responsible for such sweeping and wide-ranging changes in contemporary experience. We may even, in some cases, have to invoke distinctive historical experiences, peculiar to particular societies and giving rise to particular cultural values, to explain important

[13]There is a considerable literature on the forces—especially those relating to changes within contemporary capitalism, the rise of consumer industries, and the politics of urban planning and governance—that are causing the developments discussed in this article. This is a relatively familiar territory, and is not here our concern. For some helpful guidelines, see Harvey (1989), Davis (1990), Walzer (1995), Dear (2000), Sennett (2005), and Low and Smith (2006).

aspects of the move toward privatization, and what this means for public life.[14] Our concern in this article is not to map those larger forces transforming the shapes and structures of contemporary societies but to show their impact at the level of the lived experiences of contemporary populations. At that level, what we seem to be observing is the expansion of the realm of the private into the realm, and at the expense, of the public.

Publicity—the quality of being public, the elevation of the public realm—and privacy are not to be considered as ends in themselves. Those who, like Hannah Arendt (1998:22–78), follow the Greeks in privileging the public life of the *polis* over the domestic life of the *oikos*—a sphere reserved for women and slaves—are open to all the criticisms of liberals who stress the value of intimacy and the virtues of private life.[15] Similarly, the celebration and passionate defense of privacy runs the opposite risk of leading to an undernourished and stultifying existence, the "idiocy" of private life that the Greeks so feared.[16]

It has often been held that, for middle-class Western Europeans at least, the 18th and 19th centuries represent a "golden age" of the balance of public and private. This can best be seen in the understanding of the public as the realm of "sociability," to which corresponds the private as the sphere of "domesticity" (Weintraub 1997:16–25). The nonstate, public sphere of civil society expanded greatly, allowing for a thriving public life centered on salons, clubs, cafés, theatres, and religious and political societies.[17] To these public spaces of sociability, there corresponded the private sphere of the home, now more firmly separated from the public space by elaborate entrances and fences, and protected by stronger laws of privacy and the sanctification of the home.[18] This separation of spheres, it is said, with due respect given to the claims of both, allowed for a satisfying blend of both privacy and public life.

But this idea of the "balance" between public and private, as the most desired condition, misrepresents the actual nature of the relation between public and private in 19th-century cities, and disguises the real source of their undoubted vitality and sociability. The well-known and much studied example of the "Hausmannization" of 19th-century Paris makes this clear. When Baron Hausmann transformed Paris during the Second Empire, there was some complaint initially that the new apartment buildings constructed in that time favored the private realm too much. They seemed to shut out too much of the street life of old Paris (Marcus 2001; see also Marcus

[14]See, for instance, Makarova (2005), who shows how in contemporary Moscow the drive toward privatization in housing and urban life generally is not simply the result of neoliberal economic and political forces but more importantly reflects the legacy of the Soviet period. The extreme concern with privacy shown by many middle-class groups in Russia today comes from a reaction to what was seen as the excessive role of the public—understood largely as state activity—in the private life of citizens in the Soviet era. On this see also Garcelon (1997).

[15]We should note that Arendt's position is more complicated than this, though in the end, the general point made here is correct. See on Arendt's discussion of public and private, Kumar (1997:212–14) and Rössler (2005:107–09).

[16]Etzioni (1999) discusses a number of other dangers springing from the excessive concern with privacy, such as an unwillingness to allow the scrutiny and surveillance of suspected terrorists and the public monitoring of habitual offenders.

[17]In addition to Habermas's ([1962] 1989) classic account of the development of the public sphere, see also Van Dülmen (1992), Goodman (1994), Kale (1998), and Craveri (2005). All these later accounts emphasize the important role of women in the public sphere, in the salons especially but also more generally in the public culture of the time. For a good example of this from 19th-century America, see Hansen (1997).

[18]For a good account of these developments in domestic architecture, starting with the upper classes in the 17th century and percolating down to the working classes by the 19th, see Rybczynski (1987:51–121). See also, for further references, Kumar (1997:210–11).

1999). But for most observers it was precisely by establishing, not the separation or segregation but the interpenetration of public and private, that Hausmann's Paris eventually became the model of urban sociability and individual privacy. The new apartment buildings gave privacy, certainly, but at the same time their construction allowed for a continuing interchange between the interior space of the dwellings and the public life of the street, of the inner and the outer worlds. Similarly, the parallel construction of the new broad boulevards and large squares, with their carefully cultivated spaces for pleasure, sociability, and public interaction, created the opportunities for both public and private life. One could be private in public, without eliminating that environment of sociability that enhanced rather than diminished privacy. It was the French "painters of modern life," such as Seurat, Manet, and Caillebot, who, according to T. J. Clark, best caught this subtle interpenetration of the public and private in the new public spaces of the boulevards and cafés. What their paintings show is

> the intermingling of classes, not their neat separation, the elaborate texture of controls and avoidances that the classes bring with them to the [public places], ... an awareness of each other and ... an effort at reaching a *modus vivendi*, agreeing to ignore one another, marking out invisible boundaries and keeping oneself to oneself. (Clark 1984:265–66)

Contemporary critics of urban life in recent times, such as Jane Jacobs (1965), Roger Scruton (1984), and Iris Marion Young (1990), have echoed this conception of the relation between public and private. They mourn the loss of the reciprocal interaction of the public and private in contemporary Western cities. As Scruton puts it, "when there is no public space, private space too is threatened." Public spaces have emptied or been extinguished; private spaces have become like fortresses. In place of walls that secure the private without excluding the public, we now have "barricades." What is required are "walls that are pierced, and openings that are civil and friendly"—windows, arches, and entrances in private buildings that, as with the 18th-century squares of Georgian London or the 19th-century apartment buildings of Paris, are open to the street and that convey a sense of welcome, not of exclusion or seclusion (Scruton 1984:9–10, 15). Young talks of city life as, at its best, "the being together of strangers." Individuals meet and interact in public places, and this creates a sense of mutual trust and belonging, of common problems and common interests. But their being together does not necessarily "create a community of shared final ends, of mutual identification, and reciprocity" (Young 1990:237–38). Public and private sustain one another; the inflation or diminution of either leads to the extinction of both.[19]

For much of the 19th century, the acknowledgment of the different spheres of public and private, home and work, family and others, did not lead to segregation so much as to complementarity. One crossed the threshold of the home, moving into the public space and back again, with relative ease. The idea of the home as

[19]The seminal influence of Jane Jacobs on these conceptions is clear. The tolerance and acceptance of "great differences among neigbours" that is found in "intensely urban life," according to Jacobs, is only possible and normal "when the streets of great cities have built-in equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together on civilized but essentially dignified and reserved terms." She dwells at length on the "sidewalk contacts" as "the small change from which a city's wealth of public life may grow." And she emphasizes that such contacts generate a form of trust that "above all, *implies no private commitments*" (Jacobs 1965:67, 83, author's emphasis).

a fortress, or as a haven in a heartless world, was certainly present, but social and political realties had not yet produced that pulling apart and mutual antagonism that became such a marked feature of later times.

With the rise of highly centralized states, large bureaucracies, concentrated mass media organizations, mass political parties, and new forms of urban planning, the complex interaction between public and private broke down.[20] The line separating the private life of the home from the public life of politics and work hardened, and became less porous. The retreat into the home became one common response (the politicization of everything, as in the totalitarian states, was another). But the home was not left to develop in its own way. It was rapidly invaded by political and commercial forces that made its independence precarious and to a good extent illusory (Lasch 1979; Walzer 1995; Kumar 1997). Subjectively, individuals might feel comfortable and snug in their private dwellings. But much of the life going on there was determined by outside forces over which they had little control.

The cultivation of the home as the site of meaning and identity continues today. This is partly out of a sense of desperation.[21] There is simply nothing else currently on offer to inspire strong commitment. The decline of socialism, the attack on all forms of public organization—from health to transport—as wasteful and inefficient, the relentless privatization of cultural and educational institutions, all have served to drive people back onto, and into, the home. Family and private life have seemed the only resort, the only remaining source of satisfaction and fulfillment.

This homeward direction has been only too enthusiastically endorsed by political and commercial elites. "Apathy" is now a political virtue; it is best to leave politics to the professionals; at most, and perhaps not even then, we should turn out to vote and then quietly retreat into our domestic shells. Commercial interests for their part have seen that the home was ripe for a further wave of colonization. Having replaced domestic service, public laundries, and public eating places with washing machines, electric cookers, microwaves, and vacuum cleaners, they have moved on to equip us with a whole new array of household technologies in the field of entertainment and communication that make it both more unnecessary and less desirable for us to leave the home. Home, it is said, is where the heart is. But if the only place left with any heart is one's own private home, if the outside word is heartless, then home and heart are riveted to the same place.

The trend that we have discussed in this article, the taking of the home into the public space, does not really reverse this home-centered movement. If anything, it accentuates it. It is the next logical step. The home now overflows its physical boundaries to colonize increasing tracts of public space. The passions and preoccupations

[20]The classic accounts of this breakdown, and the reasons for it, are Habermas ([1962] 1989) and Sennett (1977:259–340), though they differ in their interpretation and to some extent in their timing of the change. While Habermas stresses the incursions of state and commerce—"the colonization of the lifeworld"—in undermining the balance between public and private, Sennett emphasizes the incursion of intimacy into the public sphere of sociability. Moreover, for Sennett, unlike Habermas, the "fall of public man" already took place in the 19th century, which for him places excessive emphasis on the home and private life. Hannah Arendt (1998:68–73) somewhat differently sees the problem as the improper insertion of the concerns of "the social"—basically household matters, concerned with "necessity"—into the public sphere of "freedom." Like Sennett, she sees this as beginning in the 19th century, but she is in greater agreement with Habermas in seeing the 20th century as the decisive period of change. One recognizes of course the dangers and temptations of singling out "golden ages" of this or that, but so far as the timing of this particular change is concerned we are basically in agreement with Habermas and Arendt.

[21]"Commentators have frequently observed that Americans seem to be attaching more importance to their homes, decorating more, going out less, and so on. I dislike the word 'cocooning', but if we do increasingly retreat to our homes, it is surely not because we love our homes more, but because we love public places less" (Rybczynski 2005:57).

of private life increasingly envelop what had previously been considered public activities. We seem anxious not to leave home behind.

The commercial and political interests that fuel this latest wave of privatization know as always how to play on our fears and fantasies. We are made to think of this portability as an increase of personal freedom. I can pack my entire CD collection on an iPod and take it with me wherever I go—on the road, in foreign parts. I will never be without it. I can put the entire contents of my computer on a USB capsule. Hanging from my belt like a key chain, it is available to me whenever and wherever I need it. My laptop computer is a portable office that not only allows me to continue my work but also keeps me in touch with friends, family, and colleagues wherever I am.

Cocooned within a world of personal concerns, enabled by the new technology to avoid contact with others in anything but the most fleeting ways, we miss the public encounters and experiences that open us to the world.[22] We eat, work, and play on our own, or with a few family members. Our lives take place within a circle of intimacy that has the attraction of familiarity. It is safe, and it gives us a feeling of security. What it lacks, what it pushes away, are the sometimes uncomfortable and challenging experiences of strangeness and novelty. It is the old illusion that Kant exposed, that the bird winging its way through the air thinks it would be freer if it could get rid of the frictions and frustrations of the very air that sustains it.

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[22]We are aware that, as one of the reviewers of this article points out, much of what we interpret as further installments of privatization can be read differently as increases in sociability or community. The argument is that much home-based equipment such as Blackberries, computers linking us to the Internet, complex entertainment centers with facilties for recording public events, private gyms, and the like are in fact bringing the social into the home, making the "private" more collective and communal. This only goes to show that there can be varieties of technological determinism, and if we are guilty of one such form, so is this criticism. But we have tried to rest our argument not just on new technologies but on the direction in which they have been propelled by commercial and political forces that have targeted the home and private life, particularly in the area of consumption. Indeed one can recognize that as with all technologies—and perhaps with all private life—there is a social and collective aspect to it; that is one of the reasons why we emphasize reciprocity rather than separation in our account of private and public. But we feel that our focus on the private and privatization does capture, better than other accounts, both the experience of individuals and the intentions of the agents responsible for current developments in technology and related areas of consumption. A similar point might be made of the criticism that our approach emphasizes too much the negative effects of the "privatization of the public," and that the new styles of personal and collective identities made possible by new technologies and new attitudes toward the public spaces have been liberating for people who have felt constrained by the formality and uniformity of the traditional public sphere. We grant this, and do not wish to deny that our account emphasizes only one side of a complex and many-faceted development. In the limited space available to us, we wanted to stress an aspect that seemed to us both less commented on and that had the advantage of linking our discussion to an important strand of the theory of the public and the private. That this emphasis reflects our own preferences and values is of course clear in the whole discussion—but not so much, we hope, as to detract too much from its usefulness as a comment on our current condition. That we are not alone in our concerns is evident from a number of sources—see, e.g., the correspondence columns of the *New York Times*, November 3, 2006.

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